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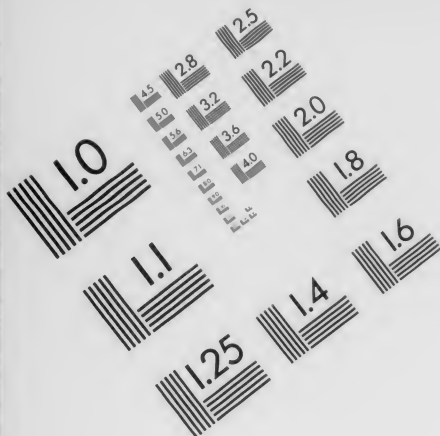
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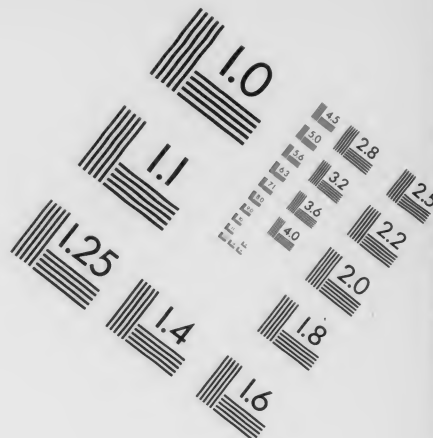


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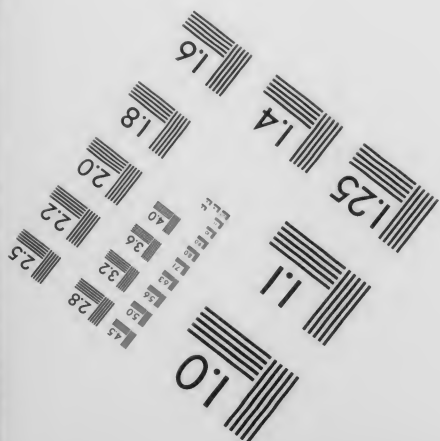
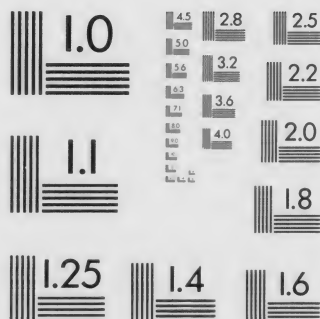
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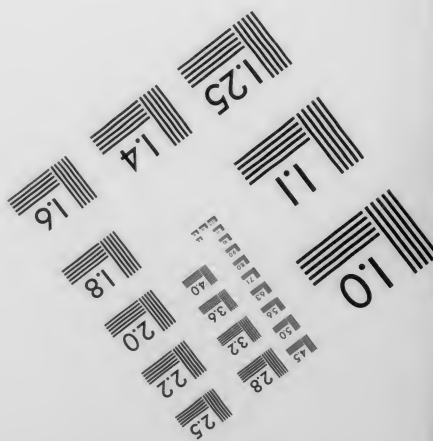
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-No. 9

AN
IMPARTIAL ACCOUNT
OF THE LATE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE
S E A M E N

OF THE
PORT OF TYNE.

BY A. TAR.

Would you hear a tale of woe,
Listen to our SEAMEN's wrongs;
Gallia is no more our foe,
BRITAIN starves her gallant Sons!!!

Want with all her ghastly train
Rushes on our brave in war,
Misery with her iron chain
Binds each brave and hardy TAR.

Newcastle upon Tyne.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY K. ANDERSON.

1815.

AN
Impartial Account,

§c. §c.

THE late dispute between the ship-owners and the seamen of this and the neighbouring ports having given rise to many erroneous assertions, as an impartial spectator, the author of this pamphlet undertakes to detail, for the public perusal, the most important circumstances that occurred both at their public and private meetings.

IN the month of September last, a calculation was made of the number of seamen out of employment in the ports of Newcastle and Shields, many of them having large families, unprovided for, as every vessel in and belonging to the port was already *manned*; and as great numbers daily flocking home from the different ships of war that were then paying off, and also from the transports, the prospect was rendered very discouraging. The ship-owners were daily binding apprentices, and it is a rare chance to find ships of two hundred tons with less than five or six apprentices on board; in addition to these, are the Master, Mate, and Carpenter, and, in general, an old man for Cook. Those ships, which are the general burden out of this port, seldom carry more than ten or eleven hands altoge-

ther, although it is well known they are greatly insufficient to manage the vessels. It is too much the custom with the ship-owners, when they bind a stout lad, (who perhaps never saw the sea in his life) to unship one of the best seamen, trusting that lad to do the duty of an experienced sailor, who even in the finest weather is sea-sick for months, and in bad weather is always to be found below; yet such is the natural propensity to *gain*, that the lives of the rest on board are never thought of; (the ship being well insured, so that the owners cannot loss.) Finding themselves thus neglected and left to starve, after having fought their country's battles in the most remote Corners of the world; after having shed their blood to secure the persons and property of the very men who now refuse them employment, what were they to do? They dreaded to enter their houses where a loving wife and children were imploring for bread, which they knew not where to obtain: every foot they heard was imagined to be that of a ravenous creditor, seeking payment for the few necessities of life they had supplied to keep miserable existence in being: to beg, they knew not the way; for every one who is acquainted with the heart of a sailor, must be conscious that he is too proud, even in the greatest distress, to solicit for charity. When it is said, he is too proud, let not the Public mistake; his pride is not like that of other classes,—his pride is to suffer the greatest privations, rather than seek

pecuniary relief; his pride is in relieving those whom he sees in distress; and to such a pitch will he extend his liberality, that in many instances he has been known to forget that tomorrow he would himself be in need of the very penny he was distributing to his suffering fellow-creatures: thus we know they are not possessed of that want of feeling which has too widely spread itself over our country; nor with that humiliating spirit which is so frequently observed among other classes of the community. Inured to the severest hardships and dangers from childhood; rudely tost about on the bitter face of the ocean, the sailor has not the opportunity of learning the smooth whining cant of the world: heedless of every care, we see him brave the greatest dangers with steady perseverance, even in the prospect of certain death!

The greater part of the sailors having been several months out of employment, and their friends no longer able to support or assist them, they at first collected together in a small body, and consulted each other what was best to be done; and as their numbers were continually increasing, in a few days they agreed to have daily musters to devise some plan to alleviate their growing misery. Finding these meetings were doing nothing towards their obtaining employment, as every ship had the usual complement, they determined that every man should share one fate, and proceeded to unman all the ships in the harbour. At first they

met with opposition by the different crews; but they soon became too strong for any single ship's company to encounter them, and those who dared to stay on board were made a public example of, by being tarred and feathered; or if their crime did not amount to that punishment, they had their jackets turned, faces blacked, and were marched through the town. By such proceedings, the ships were prevented from getting to sea, and it was expected by them the ship-owners would have been induced to employ extra men in every ship: in this, however, they were disappointed. The next plan was to take out the Mates and Carpenters, and oblige them to muster with them; by which conduct they fully expected to bring the ship-owners to their terms; but this scheme proving unsuccessful, they drew out a scale in what manner the ships should be manned; this scale was forwarded from Shields to Newcastle, Sunderland, Hartley, and Blyth, which was agreed upon by the different majorities of seamen, and presented to the ship-owners. The scale was for every ship to be manned according to the transport act, carrying five men and one boy to every hundred tons burden. The ship-owners now called a general meeting, at the Northumberland Arms, North Shields, and agreed that a committee of the shipping interest should be appointed to see the ships well manned, without stating any number of men they were to carry. To this the seamen would not agree, being bent upon

having their own proposals complied with; they accordingly placed watches on the river in boats, and patrols in the streets to prevent any from going on board; the seamen next called a general meeting of the before-mentioned ports to assemble on Cullercoat sands, each party carrying the British flag at their head, to shew their attachment to their King and Country; each party then formed a ring by themselves, and were addressed by thirteen men chosen by the body to transact any business that might be requisite; after the men's names had been called over, they formed a large ring of between eight and nine thousand men, the different men chosen stood in the middle, and were sworn as follows:

"We swear to be true to our good old King George the Third, and the Constitution, and never to forsake each other in the cause we are now engaged in, to walk peaceably and quietly about our business at all times; and never to set foot on board any ship to work until this most important business is settled."

After they were all sworn the whole body gave three cheers, and each division marched to their respective homes. Vessels of every description were now prevented from going to sea, by boats and crews appointed for that purpose, while regular watches patrolled the streets. Several of the men being in the greatest distress, those who were able subscribed

towards their relief; this, however, was found to be inadequate to the demands made; it was then thought necessary to allow small vessels to go to sea, belonging to Scotland and ports to the southward of Sunderland, on paying ten shillings for each man on board, to support those in distress on shore. Vessels going to Foreign Ports also paid their quota; ships laden with King's Stores, bound to London, and Newcastle Traders, were allowed to sail, on paying twenty shillings per man. By these means, any man wanting relief made application at the General Musters, and it was determined by the majority what each man was to receive. The money paid by Masters of ships was given to certain men, appointed for that purpose, and every day what was received and expended, was made known to the whole.—These men, as before mentioned, were chosen by the Body, and when once chosen, it was needless to endeavor getting clear. So strict were their laws, and so firmly attended to, that any man refusing to transact his part, he was blacked and put on a tree, for public example. The following Articles were made at the beginning: viz.—

ARTICLE I. Finding so many Seamen out of employment, and in great distress, we have altogether agreed not to go on board any ship or vessel, until every man can be provided for; to certify which, we individually sign our names to the annexed list, paying one penny, as an acknowledgment to the same.

II. It is expected, every man will meet at any time and place the majority of Seamen shall think fit to appoint.

III. Every man missing his muster, shall pay sixpence the first time; one shilling the second; and the third time he shall be tarred and feathered.

IV. If any man shall be found on board of ship after he has been taken out, or has been joined to this Body; he shall have his jacket turned, his face blacked, and marched through the town; if found again on board, he shall be tarred and feathered.

V. If any man shall tell the names of any of the men appointed to transact business, he shall suffer such punishment as the Seamen at large shall think fit.

VI. If any man shall be known to divulge the proceedings of this Body, he shall be tarred and feathered.

VII. As it is most likely the Owners will find out some of the men during the business, and afterwards will not employ them, it is expected every man will contribute to their support after this business is settled, by paying the sum of two shillings each, per voyage, until they get employment.

VIII. Should any man be taken and confined during the business, he is to be supported by the majority, during his confinement; and his family (if any) to be taken care of.

IX. No sort of gaming, or *sky-larking* to be allowed during our meetings, under penalty of sixpence for every offence.

X. Every man is to behave himself with the strictest attention, and walk peaceably in the streets and other places, after Muster; under the penalty of suffering such punishment as the majority shall think fit; as any thing done amiss, will get the whole Body a bad name.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

These the writer believes to be all the private papers that were amongst them, and is sorry to find so many false reports of their meetings being considered dangerous to the country: I ask, was ever seamen known to be enemies to their country? Let every man in England, put the question to himself and find what answer his conscience will give him; have they ever at the conclusion of any war

been found to hold illegal assemblies?—I believe at the end of the former war with *America* they were also in great distress, and assembled together until their complaints were heard and redressed, they then went quietly on board their ships, which I venture to say would have been the case now, had they been offered employment for all; it was no mercenary views that led them to assemble, they have been told, if they had stood out for seven pounds a voyage they would have got it; that was not their request, they all wanted a little to keep the miserable spark of life from extinguishing till trade should increase. The proposals held out to them by the Owners were rejected, knowing that very few more than the usual number would be taken, and they had resolved not to accept of any terms but such as would employ them all; this so grieved the Owners they applied for NAVAL and MILITARY force to protect their *Persons* and *Property* which they pointed out to be in the utmost danger, when in fact the only danger their Property was liable to, was what pleased Divine Providence to send—such as gales of wind and strong tides; and as to the danger their persons were in, it was only what they pleased to bring upon themselves, by inebriety at their general meetings, it being never the intention of the British Tars to disgrace themselves by laying hands upon either them or their property.—

They certainly had for a plea, that the *well disposed seamen*, were not allowed to go on

board their ships, but what were the others out of employ to do? had they gone to *their* doors to beg, it is to be feared they would have turned them away with a stern countenance, exclaiming "Begone you lazy Rascal!" Men driven to such extremities, know not how to act; every scene of his past hardships rushes into his mind, and brings from his manly heart and eyes, those sighs and tears which never before, in the midst of severest trials, found vent. Counting over the many years he has languished in foreign climes, he finds his constitution impaired,—he looks back on the battles he has fought with a Howe, a Nelson, a Collingwood, or a Duncan, and gazing on the scars of many a wound, he counts them all as trifles to this last piece of ingratitude and inhumanity—that of being left to perish with hunger! I am aware there are many who will say those who have been on board of men of war, have pensions: to these I answer, there are thousands who have been there many years, and have not one farthing of provision made for them: those who have been from fourteen to twenty years, have one shilling per day,—will that in these times keep a man in victuals, house-rent, and cloaths, how much worse must he be if he has a family.

I shall pass by many trifling occurrences during the time the Seamen held their meetings, as not being worthy of notice, and proceed to the disgraceful scene of Saturday the 21st, when the Seamen who kept watch on

the river for the purpose of keeping the ships in the harbour, were at their dinners. At ebb tide they hauled their boats on shore, when Marines were dispatched from His Majesty's Ships, and without a single man to oppose them, cut and destroyed every boat. The writer firmly believes it was never the determination of the Seamen to oppose any force that might be sent against them, which was clearly proved on the following day; for when several boats were boarded by the Marines, the crews quietly left them, and these boats were also cut to pieces. [*Query. These boats were all private property, by the destruction of them, many have lost their all,—who pays for them, the King, or the Owners?*]

On Monday the 23d inst. the Owners again resolved that protection was held out to every well disposed Seamen who wished to go on board, but that the whole body of the Seamen should have forty eight hours to consider whether they would accept of the former proposals, that of the ships being inspected by the Committees of the Insurances, and that the ships should not sail until such arrangement was made. This was never waited for; most of the men of North Shields fled to their ships, others to the ships of South Shields and Newcastle, turning the clothes of the men who had formerly belonged to them on shore; the Owners availing themselves of the moment, (thoughtless of the *Honor* they had held out to the Seamen not to go without, on an average, two extra men in each ship,) put the

ships to sea with the usual insufficient number of men, leaving after every ship was manned in the harbour, not less than four thousand of the best sailors unemployed. It is to be hoped that speedy relief will be made for those ill-treated, unfortunate men, otherwise they must lay themselves and families on the parish, which will be heaping distress upon distress.

Now when the blasts of War are o'er,
Shall Britain leave her Conquering Sons:
Implo'ring Bread from door to door,
Regardless of the deeds they've done,

O blush ye Britons at the thought,
Mark each pale and languid eye!
Hard for you each Tar has fought,
Can you leave them thus to die?

Stormy Nights and bitter Days
Have they felt upon the flood;
Where their fates in varied ways
Led them on to Scenes of blood.

Battle's heat nor Tempest's roar,
Ne'er their Courage could subdue.
Frozen Pole, or Burning Shore,
Found our Seamen ever true.

Scorching Days on Indian Seas,
Saw our Heroes still the same;
Shuddering 'neath the Northern breeze,
Adding Laurels to each Name.

Shall pale WANT in death-like Terror,
Seize upon the fearless brave?
Save them Britons lest to-morrow
Some may find an early grave.

FINIS.